

Message Text

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64

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 DRC-01 /138 W

----- 128060

R 301800Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5186

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR, EI

SUBJ: HOPES FOR TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE

SUMMARY: OFONOFF SOURCE TELLS US GOI HOPES FOR MAJOR PROGRESS IN CONFERENCE TO BE HELD NEXT WEEK IN ENGLAND ON REMAINING ELEMENTS OF IRISH POLITICAL SOLUTION. LOYALISTS WILL NOT BE REPRESENTED, HOWEVER, AND HE FEARS THIS COULD BE TRAGIC OMISSION. END SUMMARY.

1. EXACT OPENING DATE OF CONFERENCE NOT ANNOUNCED FOR SECURITY REASONS, BUT WE GATHER THAT MID-WEEK IS GOOD GUESS. IRISH ARE PREPARED CONTINUE AT TABLE AS LONG AS NECESSARY, AND THEIR DELEGATION INCLUDES VIRTUALLY EVERYONE IN GOVERNMENT WHO IS GOOD ON PROBLEM -- FROM PM DOWN TO FONOFF EXPERTS. SUBJECT IS OBVIOUSLY OF GREATEST POSSIBLE IMPORTANCE TO DUBLIN, AND GOVERNMENT IS NOT SPARING ANY EFFORT.

2. WHILE PRES STILL REFERS TO "TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE," GOI NOW PREFERS AVOID THIS TERM. SINCE THE THREE NI PARTIES WHO ARE TO FORM EXECUTIVE WILL BE ATTENDING IN THEIR OWN RIGHT (NOT AS COALITION), DUBLIN VIEWS THIS AS "PENTA-CONFERENCE" OF TWO SOVEREIGN GOVTS AND THREE POLITICAL PARTIES. NI LOYALISTS WILL NOT BE

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REPRESENTED; GOI HAS BEEN FORCED ABANDON ITS GOAL OF

BRINGING THEM INTO FORMAL TALKS. SOURCE WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED BY THIS AND THOUGH RESULT COULD BE TRAGIC, SINCE LOYALISTS MAY TURN EVEN FURTHER TOWARDS VIOLENCE. BUT THEY ARE CLEARLY NOT PREPARED PARTICIPATE RESPONSIBLY IN CONFERENCE.

3. CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN HAS NOT YET BEEN AGREED. DUBLIN DOES NOT WANT BRITISH CHAIRMAN, AND NEUTRAL IS BEING SOUGHT. IF NECESSARY DUBLIN WOULD RELUCTANTLY AGREE TO ALTERNATE CHAIRMANSHIP WITH LONDON, BUT THIS WOULD CREATE PROBLEM FOR FAULKNER. DUBLIN'S REAL OBJECTIVE IS TO GET WHITELAW OUT OF IMPOTENT CHAIRMAN ROLE AND INTO NEGOTIATIONS AS HEAD OF BRITISH SIDE. SOURCE THINKS WHITELAW'S PRESENCE AT HEAD OF BRITISH TEAM IS ALMOST INDISPENSIBLE--NO ONE ELSE COULD DO IT.

4. BRITISH HAVE PROPOSED, AND DUBLIN HAS READILY ACCEPTED, THREE TOPICS OF DISCUSSION: COUNCIL OF IRELAND, ACCEPTANCE OF STATUS OF NI BY REPUBLIC, AND SECURITY. ALL ARE RELATED, SINCE SECURITY ROLE OF SOME KIND IS NOW LIKELY FOR COUNCIL OF IRELAND.

5. AS PART OF DEAL ON COUNCIL IF IRELAND, WE BELIEVE GOI WILL MAKE FORTHCOMING STATEMENT ON ACCEPTANCE OF CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS OF NI. WE DO NOT HAVE TEXT OF STATEMENT BUT HAVE HAD MANY HINTS, BOTH PRIVATELY AND PUBLICLY, THAT DUBLIN WILL DO BEST IT CAN. WE ARE NOT AWARE OF SERIOUS RESERVATIONS HERE ON THIS SCORE, AND GOI KNOWS IT MUST GIVE FAULKNER AS MUCH HELP AS POSSIBLE. THERE IS TECHNICAL PROBLEM IN ARTICLES 2 AND 3 OF CONSTITUTION. WE BELIEVE THESE WILL BE DROPPED OR MODIFIED IN TIME, BUT THIS WILL REQUIRE REFERENDUM, WHICH WILL PROBABLY NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL ALL PARTIES HAVE AGREED ON ENTIRE NEW CONSTITUTION AND ARE CONVINCED THE PUBLIC WILL ACCEPT IT.

6 DUBLIN HOPES FOR FULL SUBSTANTIVE AGREEMENT ON COUNCIL BY END OF FIRST STAGE OF CONFERENCE. SECOND STAGE IS PLANNED FOR JANUARY TO SIGN FORMAL DOCUMENTS, AFTER NECESSARY CHANGES IN LAW AT WESTMINSTER. GOI STILL BELIEVES FAULKNER CAN DELIVER HIS END OF BARGAIN, ALTHOUGH HIS POSITION IN UNIONIST PARTY IS SHAKY. BASIC COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE IN FACT LARGELY BEEN AGREED IN TALKS PRECEDING FORMATION OF EXECUTIVE-DESIGNATE. (SEE DUBLIN 1549). MANY PROBLEMS REMAIN TO BE WORKED OUT HOWEVER, INCLUDING METHODS OF FINANCING AND "DEVOLVING" POWERS TO COUNCIL.

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7 COMMENT: POLITICAL SOLUTION IS STILL ON SCHEDULE, AND THERE IS ROOM FOR OPTIMISM THAT PARTIES CAN AGREE ON FULL NI PACKAGE -- INCLUDING COUNCIL OF IRELAND AND SECURITY AS WELL AS EXECUTIVE. EVEN IF PACKAGE AGREED, HOWEVER, THERE WILL REMAIN SERIOUS CHALLENGE FROM LOYALIST WHO REJECT IT. WINDING DOWN OF VIOLENCE IS FALLING BEHIND POLITICAL PROGRESS. SORENSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: RECOGNITION, FOREIGN RELATIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973DUBLIN01584
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: DUBLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t1973113/aaaaabwt.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30-Jul-2001 by kellew0>; APPROVED <28-Sep-2001 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HOPES FOR TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE SUMMARY: OFONOFF SOURCE TELLS US GOI HOPES FOR MAJOR PROGRESS IN
TAGS: PBOR, EI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005